

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 5339

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, VE, US
SUBJECT: THE "BRIEFING PAPERS LEAK": DOMESTIC POLITICAL REACTION

REFS: A. CARACAS 5335 B. CARACAS 5338

1. DOMESTIC REACTION HAS BEEN INTENSE TO THE UPI STORY OF "CONFIDENTIAL BRIEFING PAPERS" ALLEGING THAT ACCION DEMOCRATICA WAS SUSCEPTIBLE TO DEFEAT IN THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS (REF A). THE GOVERNMENT, THE AD AND PRESIDENT PEREZ ARE CLEARLY ANGRY. ALL HAVE ISSUED STATEMENTS REJECTING THE PRESS STORY'S AND THE BRIEFING PAPERS' PORTRAIT OF VENEZUELA AND THE DOMESTIC SITUATION, AND ALL HAVE TAKEN THE GAMBIT OF BLAMING THE "MULTINATIONAL" NEWS AGENCIES AND "ENEMIES OF VENEZUELA" AS SEEKING TO EMBARASS THE COUNTRY. PRIVATELY, AND IN A FEW CASES PUBLICLY, SOME GOVERNMENT FIGURES ARE DARKLY IMPLYING THAT COPEI (AND ITS AMERICAN ELECTORAL ADVISORS) MAY BE RESPONSIBLE.

2. PRESIDENT PEREZ WAS INTERVIEWED IN CIUDAD GUAYANA WHERE HE SPENT THE WEEK-END INAUGURATING PROJECTS. FRONT PAGE STORIES IN ALL JUNE 11 PAPERS QUOTE PEREZ AS LABELLING THE UPI ACCOUNT CONFIDENTIAL

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"INSULTING" TO VENEZUELA AND "FALSE". NOW, HE SAID, "IT IS UP TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO CLARIFY THIS, AND I AM SURE THAT THE US GOVERNMENT IN ALL SINCERITY WILL HAVE TO SAY IT IS FALSE". PEREZ WENT ON TO REMIND HIS QUESTIONERS OF THE NEW YORK TIMES CIA CHARGES OF LAST FEBRUARY AND SAID, "YOU KNOW HOW OUR NAME AND REPUTATION WAS CLEAN WHEN THE SITUATION ENDED. THE SAME WILL OCCUR NOW".

3. PRESIDENT PEREZ THEN WENT ON TO CHARGE THAT "ENEMIES" OF VENEZUELA SOUGHT TO DISCREDIT OPEC, VENEZUELA'S OIL POSITION AND ITS THIRD WORLD POSTURE, ALL OF WHICH HAD EARNED THE ENMITY OF THE "TRANSNATIONAL COMPANIES THAT MANIPULATE THE NEWS". REFERRING TO THE CHARGE OF BAD MANAGEMENT OF OIL INCOME AND CORRUPTION, WHICH CLEARLY TOUCHED A NERVE, PEREZ SAID "HERE (CIUDAD GUAYANA) YOU SEE IN THIS GREAT SPECTACLE HOW THE PETROLEUM INCOME IS INVESTED. AND AS TO OUR HONESTY, WE MAY HAVE MANY DEFECTS, WE MAY HAVE MANY DIFFICULTIES, BUT THOSE WHO HAVE TRIED TO CORRUPT OUR NATION ARE PRECISELY THOSE WHO HAVE FALSE INFORMATION".

4. AD SPOKESMAN CARLOS CANACHE MATA WAS QUOTED AS MAKING A LENGTHY STATEMENT DOWNPLAYING THE EFFECT OF "SERMONS FROM THE NORTH" AND STATED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S RECORD WOULD GIVE VICTORY TO THE AD. MINISTER OF INFORMATION ARMAS ISSUED A STATEMENT EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE GROWING AMOUNT OF INFORMATION PUBLISHED ABROAD WHICH PLACES VENEZUELA IN A POOR LIGHT. REPORTEDLY HE ALSO SUMMONED THE AP AND UPI REPRESENTATIVES TO HIS OFFICE FOR QUESTIONING.

5. COPEI SPOKESMAN, PEDRO PABLO AGUILAR, HAD A FIELD DAY, AGREEING WITH ALL THE CRITICISM OF THE PEREZ ADMINISTRATION AND THE PRAISE OF THE COPEI CANDIDATE IN THE UPI STORY, STATING THAT THE GOVERNMENT LOOKS FOOLISH TRYING "TO INTERPRET AS ATTACKS ON THE NATION THE TRUTH ABOUT THE DISASTERS OF THIS ADMINISTRATION."
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6. THE EMBASSY'S STATEMENT (REF B) WAS WIDELY REPORTED FACTUALLY AND WITHOUT COMMENT.

7. COMMENT: THE UPI ACCOUNT OF THE BRIEFING PAPERS ANALYSIS OF THE DOMESTIC SITUATION AMOUNTS, IN EFFECT WHETHER INTENDED OR NOT, TO A SERIOUS INTERFERENCE INTO VENEZUELAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. FIRST IT HAS INJECTED THE USG AND PRESIDENT CARTER SPECTACULARLY INTO THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. BECAUSE USG SUPPORT OR THE LACK OF IT HAS AN ALMOST MAGICAL EFFECT ON THE FATE OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, THE STORIES HAVE DONE DAMAGE TO AD CANDIDATE LUIS PINERUA AND GIVEN A BOOST TO ALL OTHERS.

8. CLEARLY, PEREZ AND THE AD LEADERS THINK THE US GOVERNMENT IS PARTIALLY TO BLAME, EVEN IF THEY HAVE TRAINED THEIR PUBLIC GUNS ON THE WIRE SERVICES AND VAGUE "ENEMIES". THEY MAY INITIALLY HAVE HOPED THAT THE PURPORTED ANALYSIS WAS SPURIOUS OR DISTORTED. BUT NOW THAT CONTINUING LEAKS AUTHENTICATE THEIR ACCURACY (SEE SEPTTEL) THEY CAN ONLY BE DEEPLY DISTURBED AT THE LINES OF THE ANALYSIS. THE EFFECT ON PEREZ CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN US REMAINS TO BE MEASURED, BUT IT IS DISSOLVING RAPIDLY WITH EACH ADDITIONAL STORY.

9. FINALLY, THE REPORTS FEED BAD FEELING BETWEEN THE PARTIES.
GIVEN THE CONSPIRATORIAL CAST OF THE VENEZUELAN MIND, THE AD
SERIOUSLY BELIEVES THAT THE LEAKS WERE DONE FOR SOME ULTERIOR
AND DELIBERATE PURPOSE. MOST OF THEM TRULY SUSPECT THAT COPEI'S
AMERICAN ADVISERS (AND FOREIGN MINISTER CONSALVI FLATLY SAID
THAT TO THE AMBASSADOR) OBTAINED THE INFORMATION THROUGH THEIR
CONTACTS AND LEAKED IT.
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